



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## RECENT EXCAVATIONS IN THE ROMAN FORUM.

---

By MASON D. GRAY, A.M.,  
The University of Chicago.

---

THE excavation of the Roman Forum, practically discontinued for fifteen years, was resumed in 1898 on a more extensive and systematic plan than ever before. The Italian government, which seems aroused at last to its opportunity and responsibility, is conducting the work through its minister of public instruction, Baccelli, while the immediate supervision is intrusted to a competent architect, Boni.

The promoters have three objects. First, they aim to restore to their original positions the heaps of broken columns, cornices, and bases accumulated in previous explorations. Thus they have restored in part the temple of Vesta and reconstructed a tiny chapel near by. To the average tourist nothing could be more gratifying than the transformation of meaningless heaps of rubbish into veritable monuments of ancient Rome. This work, it is hoped, will render possible a theoretical restoration of the entire Forum far more accurate than heretofore.

The second object is to reach the lowest ancient level, wherever possible without injuring later structures; to penetrate to early imperial, republican, kingly, and even prehistoric strata. Hitherto excavations have ceased upon reaching any pavement, even of relatively late construction, and this arbitrary rule has needlessly delayed many discoveries. In pursuance of this object the Sacra Via, the most important of Roman streets, has been exposed to the original level in a considerable part of its course through the Forum. The important discoveries discussed below were made through the application of this idea.

Lastly they aim to complete the investigation of structures already partially uncovered, and to excavate the unexplored sites of the senate house and the Basilica Æmilia.

Among the most important buildings whose plan can now be accurately determined is the Regia. This was the residence of the high-priest and adjoined the temple of Vesta, where with solemn ceremony he annually extinguished and relighted the sacred fire. Here Cæsar passed his last days, and here was spent that last night

when, according to tradition, visions warned him and his wife Calpurnia of his doom.

The round temple of Vesta, where the Vestal virgins guarded the sacred fire of Rome's symbolic hearth, has been thoroughly explored. Beneath it has been found the sacred vault where the holiest objects were kept, and which no one but a Vestal could ever enter. However, one unimaginative excavator pronounces it a receptacle for the ashes of the sacred fire.

Close by is the house of the Vestals, where six Vestals, each for thirty years, dwelt in strict seclusion, guarding the sacred fire in the temple adjoining. Many inscriptions witness to their power and influence. One, with the mutilated name of a chief Vestal who became Christian, testifies eloquently to the vital force of Christianity penetrating thus the innermost sanctuary of paganism.

One of the most interesting discoveries was the basis of the altar erected on the spot where the body of Cæsar was cremated by the mob, after Antony's eloquent harangue.

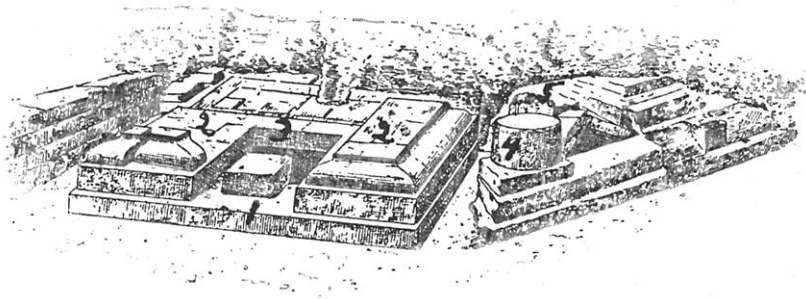
North of the Forum has been excavated the Basilica Æmilia, justly named, for it was constructed three times by members of the Æmilian gens. Before it, on the site of the shops from which Virginia's father seized the knife to slay her, have been found traces of a portico, erected by Augustus in honor of his grandsons Lucius and Gaius Cæsar, then his heirs-apparent.

The much-mooted question of the sites of the curiæ, or senate houses, seems settled. The first curia was assigned by the Romans to the seventh century B. C., while the present church of S. Adriano preserves part of the last curia, erected about 300 A. D. There were several intermediate structures, but have they occupied the same site? Definite traces of some of the intermediate curiæ have been found, and the sites of all were probably identical. Surely it must be with a feeling approaching awe that one stands on the site of that building which, in theory or in practice, for nearly a millennium represented the sovereignty of regal, republican, and imperial Rome.

Before the curia were found the "black stones" (*lapides niger*), which have caused so much discussion. An inclosure was uncovered surrounded on three sides by marble blocks and paved with black marble. Now Festus, a second-century writer, connects some such object with Romulus, and it was at once heralded as the veritable tomb of Romulus. And when we reflect that not a square foot of this marble has been found elsewhere in Italy, and when we find in classical texts references

to a *niger lapis* on this identical spot, it is difficult not to infer a relation. But its interpretation is doubtful. The Romans themselves had no clear ideas on the subject. One hints that it marked the spot where Romulus was buried, others call it the tomb of Faustulus. With our scant material we can hardly hope for more definite conclusions. The inclosure is certainly a late third-century reconstruction, but probably represents some object of traditional veneration, dating from remote antiquity, in which a "black stone" was an essential element.

Interest in this object was wholly eclipsed by a new discovery (see cuts) five feet beneath the *lapis niger*. The find, which bears certain

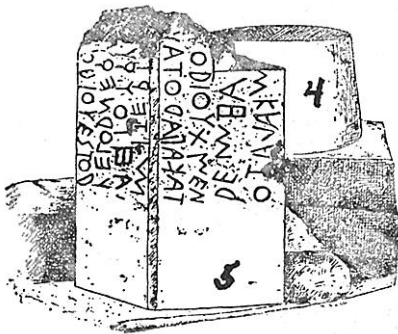


evidences of a most ancient epoch, was as follows: a stone platform (1), with two oblong pedestals (2, 2) connected by a wall (3). Within this inclosure were found numerous little objects—bones of animals, fragments of vases, etc. Their general condition points to deliberate destruction by man, and probably indicates some great expiatory sacrifice. None of the objects are later than 300 B. C., and we may possibly fix the date of the sacrifice at 390 B. C., when the Gauls destroyed the city. The pollution of barbarian profanation had to be expiated, but the sacrificial remains with the surrounding monuments disappeared directly from the sight and knowledge of man, when the ruins necessitated rebuilding at a higher level.

Outside were found a conical pedestal (4), which may have supported the original "black stone," and a pyramidal stele (5), bearing on all sides what is unquestionably the oldest extant Latin inscription. Unfortunately it is broken off about two feet from the ground, and the length and restoration of the inscription are uncertain. The interpretation of the inscription has been the subject of voluminous and acrimonious discussion. Numerous restorations are proposed, no one of which satisfies any but its author. The only thing certain is its religious

character, as the words *rex* (*sacrorum*), "priest;" *calator*, "servant of the priests;" *sacer esto*, "accursed," seem to prove. But this is significant, and perhaps in the very heart of Christian Rome has been found the oldest written memorial of the paganism it overthrew. For the forms of the letters prove the recent adoption of the Greek alphabet and point to the seventh century B. C.

The cut (5) shows the last half of the inscription. The line at the extreme right runs from left to right, the next right to left, and so on. The portion represented in the cut reads (with restorations by Ceci):



quos rex per mentorem  
KALATOREM Hapead  
endo adaCIOD, IOUX  
MENTA KAPIAD DOTA  
Vovead.  
iniM ITE RI Koised  
nounasias iM.  
QUOI HAVELOD  
NEQUam sied dolod  
maloD, dIOVE eSTOD.  
quOI VOVIOD sacer  
Diove estod.

Which must mean something like this:

When the priest through the herald or attendant has admitted them with ritual of song, let him prayerfully take the auspices and dedicate their offerings.

And likewise let him perform these duties on the nones here.

Whoever by the auspices is shown unworthy and sinful, let him be accursed. Whoever by (the failure to fulfil) his vow, let him be accursed of Jove.

It must be remembered that this translation depends largely upon the restorations, and these, despite pages of learned defense, are little better than guesses. Only the discovery of the remainder of the stone can solve the puzzle, and of this there is now little hope.